

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 974

By Cooper B

A RESOLUTION recognizing the efforts of Southwest Tennessee Community College to support expanded access to education in dispensing opticianry and ophthalmics.

WHEREAS, the Tennessee General Assembly believes in a strong educational system that provides a quality education and fosters a highly-skilled workforce; and

WHEREAS, a highly-skilled workforce remains of utmost importance, especially, during periods of economic uncertainty; and

WHEREAS, the Pierce-Albright Report in 1957 led to a \$200,000 appropriation by the Tennessee General Assembly in 1963 to initiate the community college system; and

WHEREAS, the philosophy of community colleges in Tennessee has been to provide higher education for all Tennessee residents; and

WHEREAS, under the leadership of Governor Frank G. Clement, the first three community colleges were established in 1965, with one in each of Tennessee's three grand divisions—Cleveland State in East Tennessee, Columbia State in Middle Tennessee, and Jackson State in West Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, additional community colleges opened in Dyersburg and Tullahoma in 1969, and a sixth community college opened in Morristown in 1970; and

WHEREAS, in 1969, the General Assembly, upon the recommendation of Governor Buford Ellington and the Tennessee Department of Education, authorized three additional community colleges to be built in Sumner, Roane, and Shelby counties; and

WHEREAS, after visits by Commissioner J. Howard Warf and other officials from the Tennessee Department of Education in 1969, a site in Harriman was chosen as the permanent location of Roane State Community College; and

WHEREAS, Roane State Community College opened in Harriman, Tennessee, in the fall of 1971 and currently serves as the only institution of higher learning in Tennessee offering courses in the allied health field of ophthalmic dispensing opticianry to students; and

WHEREAS, graduates from the Roane State opticianry program have gone on to competently serve consumers in Tennessee and the rest of the world by opening their own independent optical practices and by providing their services within countless business and medical establishments under the auspices of optometrists, ophthalmologists, hospitals, and other settings; and

WHEREAS, demand for the services of dispensing opticians will continually increase, especially among an ever-growing middle-aged and elderly population; and

WHEREAS, as the share of the population in these older age groups increases and as people live longer, more opticians will be needed to provide services to them; and

WHEREAS, Southwest Tennessee Community College serves as a culmination of rich history drawing on the legacies of two colleges, Shelby State Community College and State Technical Institute at Memphis, which were consolidated on July 1, 2000; and

WHEREAS, Southwest Tennessee Community College is a comprehensive, multicultural, public, open-access college whose mission is to anticipate and respond to the educational needs of students, employers, and communities in Shelby and Fayette counties and the surrounding Mid-South region; and

WHEREAS, Southwest Tennessee Community College offers Associate of Applied Science, Associate of Arts, and Associate of Science degrees, academic and technical certificate programs, and courses that prepare students for transfer, employment, and career advancement in areas that include allied health sciences, nursing, business, computer technologies, criminal justice, education, and engineering and related technologies, while continually developing new programs in emerging fields the college provides citizens with an effective teaching and learning environment designed to raise educational levels, enhance economic development, and enrich personal lives; and

WHEREAS, instruction and degree offerings in the allied health field of dispensing opticianry at Southwest Tennessee Community College will serve as the perfect complement to the Opticianry Program currently offered at Roane State Community College and to other

course offerings provided at other institutions of higher learning in the Middle Region of Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby express our support and commend the efforts of persons aspiring to enter the field of opticianry and support the efforts of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the Tennessee Board of Regents, in consultation with President Nathan Essex, in the implementation of such curriculum and program at Southwest Tennessee Community College.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an enrolled copy of this resolution be transmitted to Southwest Tennessee Community College and to the Tennessee Dispensing Opticians Association with this final clause omitted from such copy.